



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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me is something distinct from habits, and though these may in time form character it is a matter of generations rather than of weeks. Experience and influences will modify character to the very end of life.

My grown-up son said to me the other day, it is not the habits of punctuality which my father *tried* to form in me that have made me punctual, it is the *unpunctuality* of this household that has converted me. With many apologies for this long letter.—Yours very truly,

X. Y.

DEAR EDITOR,—You are so very good in taking notice of my odds and ends that I venture again with a suggestion. A sermon I heard the other day on "the Principle of Almsgiving," with a special reference to *children*, made me wish that you could get some one to write a little note or article on it in the *Parents' Review*. It is so usual a practice for parents when starting for church to deal round pennies for the offertory. "Here's something to put in the bag." What idea can this convey to the child of a *gift from itself to God*? The preacher was urging on his people a practice that I always have (and, of course, countless other mothers among the multitude), of giving a regular allowance, in my case only one shilling a month (plus halfpennies earned for quick dressing in the mornings). From the shilling one quarter is dedicated as not the child's, but to be given to God. So far from its being grudged, I find often that more is added. Also I do not think it a good plan to lend money in church if the purse is forgotten—even if the little face flushes with disappointment over its forgetfulness to change the purse into the Sunday frock pocket; for the debt discharged to mother, afterwards at home, *cannot seem the same thing*. We suggest the home missionary box on such occasions, on the return! We always talk of a "tenth" at least, and that for big folks' purses, which have to open for the bread and butter, and all kinds of things; also we keep before us the inspiring words in the Acts, which, although not mentioned in the Gospels seem to have been so frequently used that they passed into a proverb, of the Lord Jesus, "*Now He said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.*"

E. V.

DEAR EDITOR,—As one of your readers who is much interested in the *House of Education*, I venture to ask what salary would be expected by a "Tante." I have heard it stated that it would certainly be beyond the possibilities of many slender incomes; and yet it is to mothers who cannot afford to pay high wages, and secure superior help, that "Tante" would be so invaluable.

In reply to "An Appreciative Reader" of the *Parents' Review*, I should like to mention *Chamber Dramas for Children*, by Mrs. George Macdonald.

Yours truly,

A. G. S.

THE PARENTS' REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
OF HOME-TRAINING AND CULTURE.

"Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life."

RUSKIN IN RELATION TO DANTE.

BY JULIA FIRTH.

READERS of Ruskin will remember his special comments on Dante in "Modern Painters," in "Munera Pulveris," and in "Fors Clavigera" (Letters xxiii. and xxiv.), and recall the references which he constantly makes to him and other great ones gone, as to invisible friends and brothers, with whom he is at one. "Only the imaginative truth is precious," he writes: "when- ever we want to know what are the chief facts of any case, it is better not to go to political economists, not to mathematicians, but to the great poets; for I find they always see more of the matter than any one else." He describes, in reference to Dante and others, "The imagination brooding and wandering, but dream-gifted, so as to summon at any moment exactly such groups of ideas as shall justly fit each other," and gives instances of the mode in which the imaginative faculty, "the highest intellectual power of man," seizes its material. "All that it affirms, judges, describes, it affirms from within."

In his "Inaugural Lectures on Art," he says: "it was not until after an interval of nearly two thousand years of various error and pain, that partly as the true reward of Christian warfare nobly sustained through centuries of trial, and partly as the visionary culmination of the faith which saw in a maiden's

purity the link between God and her race, the highest and holiest strength of mortal love was reached: and together with it in the song of Dante, and the painting of Bernard of Luino and his fellows, the perception and embodiment for ever of whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report;—that, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, men might think on these things."

Those who have learned to love Dante through Ruskin have naturally become observant of the points of resemblance between the great Italian poet and moralist of the fourteenth century and the prose-poet and moralist of our own days. The affinity of great souls is a relationship which is not marred by any questions of comparison; the lesser is supremely happy in reverent admiration; the greater is, in this case, already amongst the immortals. All that is common to both becomes the heritage of noble thinkers who rejoice in the double beam which illuminates some of the high places of their thought. A soul *imparadised*, it may be, by love for a pure and beautiful being, as sweet and true, and, perhaps, as severe as Dante's Beatrice, is naturally in fellowship with Dante's pure and imaginative passion; and the early fading of the flower raises *his* thoughts also to the "*rosa sempiterna*," with its "fair assemblage, stoles of snowy white."

Ruskin's love of Italy, his love of early Italian art and architecture, and his appreciation of the original, high ideal of monasticism, place him in sympathy with Dante, Giotto, and St. Francis.

Even to ordinary travellers the interest of the Baptistery of Florence is enhanced by the memory of the consecration of her greatest son, and their admiration of it is quickened by his words, "*il mio bel San Giovanni*." They look at the Sasso di Dante, let into the wall near the Cathedral, and imagine him resting there when the Duomo had not yet risen from its foundations, and the Bargello was not yet completed; they go into the Bargello itself and see, in one of the groups of the Paradise, painted by Giotto on a partition wall, that pure and sensitive young face, which was to become in later life so furrowed and intensified in expression, so fit an index to the "*animo sdegnoso*," which had to front the sorrow of banishment from all that he chiefly loved. They see also the marble monument in the Church of Santa Croce, big, empty, and futile as it is, the

poet's mortal remains resting at Ravenna, whence in life he was not exiled. At Pisa, they may recall the well-known episode of Ugolino and the tower of famine; they may perhaps remember at Bologna that Dante compares the stooping Autœus to the leaning tower of Garisenda, and at Montereccione or other turretted cities, recollect "*gli orribili giganti*," which he mistakes for towers, in Canto XXXI. of the "*Inferno*." At Verona, while they find out the little *ladders* in the beautiful old ironwork, and, again, repeatedly on the tombs, they may think of the days when Can Grande della *Scala*, was the magnificent young patron of the exiled poet who found later

"How salt the savour is of others' bread,
How hard the passage to descend and climb
By others' stairs." *

In the pine forest at Ravenna, travellers may recall how Dante compared the pleasant air and "*jocund lays*" of the earthly Paradise to the gathering melody rolling from branch to branch "*along the piny forests on the shore of Chiassi*"; and when they see a candle held within an alabaster tomb in the church containing Galla Placidia's sarcophagus, they may reflect that hence, perhaps, the poet took his comparison when describing a track of light in the planet Mars, the placed allotted to the soldiers of the cross.† At Padua, the virtues, as painted by Giotto, fit into the theological system of Dante, and at Assisi the frescoes by the same painter take the spectator back to the "*Poverty and Francis*" of the beautiful eleventh Canto of the *Paradiso*.

These are but a few of the associations of place and art which Ruskin has had to quicken his intuitive understanding of Dante; he has been no passing traveller, he has spent months at a time in the study of art and history in various Italian cities; he tells us that he "*lived beside*" Giotto's Campanile at Florence "*many a day*," and looked out upon it from his "*windows by sunlight and moonlight*." And again and again he has returned to scenes so dear to him, with a mind "*more deeply satisfied and more divinely athirst*."

He has given the name of *Preterita* to his autobiography, and we find Dante using the word in Canto XXIII. of the *Paradiso*, when Beatrice, after he has witnessed the triumph of Christ,

* "*Paradiso XVII.*" Carey's translation.

† *Paradiso XV.*

says to him, "Thou hast seen things that empower thee to sustain my smile." "I was as one" (he says), "when a forgotten dream

"Doth come across him, and he strives in vain
To shape it to his fantasy again.
Whereas that gracious boon was proffer'd me,
Which never may be cancel'd from the book.
Wherein the *past* is written."

[Che mai non si stingue
Del libro che'l *preterito* rassegna,
Par. xxiii. 54].

We shall see what food there is in the *Divina Commedia* for a heart passionately loving justice, vehemently insisting on gladness and scornfully repelling all that is base.

Ruskin writes in "Modern Painters," of the definiteness of pictorial art in mediæval landscape; he remarks also that Dante makes his *Inferno* definite, his imaginative faculty being greater than that of Milton, who makes it vague. In the *Purgatory* there is more light and air, but no more liberty. In the *Paradise*, though there is perfect freedom and infinity of space, though for trenches we have planets and for cornices constellations, yet there is more cadence, procession and order among the redeemed souls than any others; they fly so as to describe letters and sentences in the air, and rest in circles like rainbows, or determinate figures, as of a cross and an eagle; in which certain of the more glorified natures are so arranged as to form the eye of the bird, while those most highly blessed are arranged with their white crowds in leaflets so as to form the image of a white rose in the midst of heaven.

These "more glorified natures" were those who had been eminent upon earth for the administration of justice; and the reward of the worthy use of riches is shown by Dante in the fifth and sixth orbs of the *Paradise*. The avaricious and prodigal, whose souls are lost, are placed in the fourth circle of the *Inferno*, the largest in all hell; the two bands of misers and spendthrifts impel heavy weights before them, and clash together from opposite directions. Of usurers none are redeemed; they made their money inactively: they sit on the sand, but are equally without rest; "sharp and fiery hail" beats down upon "the torrid soil." "Dante's *Plutus* is specially and definitely the spirit of contention and competition or evil commerce; because

... this kind of commerce 'makes all men strangers'; his speech is therefore unintelligible, and no single soul of all those ruined by him has *recognisable features*."

The avaricious and prodigal, whose souls are capable of purification, are described in the nineteenth Canto of the *Purgatorio*: "The redeemable sins of avarice and prodigality are, in Dante's sight, those which are without deliberate or calculated operation. The lust or lavishness of riches can be purged, so long as there has been no servile consistency of dispute and competition for them. The sin is spoken of as that of degradation by the love of earth: it is purified by deeper humiliation, the souls crawl on their bellies, their chant is, 'my soul cleaveth unto the dust.' But the spirits thus condemned are all recognisable, and even the worst examples of the thirst for gold . . . are of men swept by the passion of avarice into violent crime, but not sold to its steady work." "The souls whose love of wealth is pardonable, have been first deceived into pursuit of it by a dream of its higher uses, or by ambition."

Ruskin, in "*Munera Pulveris*," where this commentary occurs, regards the rocks of Scylla and Charybdis as indicating two practical ways of life: "The monsters that haunt them are quite distinct from the rocks themselves, which, having many other subordinate significations, are in the main Labour and Idleness, or getting and spending, each with its attendant monster or betraying demon."

A strict and all-pervading justice is the foundation of Ruskin's teaching. In ruling, in buying, in spending, the first condition to be considered is what is due to those who are governed, to those who sell, to those who produce. The demands of equity have to be discovered and complied with at whatever cost; "the market may have its martyrdoms as well as the pulpit, and trade its heroisms as well as war."

The political economy of "Unto the last" is now no longer attacked, its high truths are perceived and accepted, and men and women who follow its teaching give diligence more and more to doing justly in all relations of life.

It is worthy of remark that Ruskin always takes into account the affections of men, and never deals with them as, or wishes them to become, mere machines. Thus: "I have said balances of justice—meaning, in the term justice to include affection—such affection as one man *owes* to another. All right relations

between master and operative, and all their best interests ultimately depend on these." When he writes on Dante in the "Stones of Venice" (vol. ii. p. 329), he says: "All the sins of Christians are, in the seventeenth Canto [of the Purgatorio], traced to the deficiency or aberration of affection." In a passage of "Modern Painters," the same principle is applied to art: "The only true test of good or bad is ultimately strength of affection. For it does not matter with what wise purposes, or on what wise principles the thing is drawn, if it be not drawn for love of it, it will never be right; and if it be drawn for love of it, it will never be wrong—love's misrepresentation being truer than the most mathematical presentation."

(To be continued.)

A STUDY OF THE FIRST PSALM.

(Notes of a Lesson for Older Children.)

BY T. G. ROOPER.

BIBLICAL studies occupy a large portion of the time which is devoted to the education of nearly all children. Many of those who think most carefully about education are anxious that children should in future exercise the constructive powers of the mind rather more than they do at present, even if they have, in consequence, less time to spend in storing up information. While a child is mastering a skeleton outline of the History of Israel, his mind is receptive rather than constructive throughout the process. The question is, Can any course of Biblical study be arranged in which the child shall be called upon to exercise his imagination, fancy and judgment? Can a child be set to any task, the result of which will be a production of his own, however imperfect, and not a reproduction of somebody else's work, however excellent. In the following brief notes of a lesson on the First Psalm, I have endeavoured to indicate a method by which the child can learn the pleasure of constructive mental efforts in Biblical as in other subjects. I do not suppose that such lessons can be given to large classes in a school; but in the confidence of a family circle or of a very small class, I think the experiment would be attended with success.

LESSON I.

THE BEATITUDE PSALMS AND THE BEATITUDES.

"Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly." There are several Psalms which commence like the first with the expression, "*Blessed is the man.*" These are